

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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R 220957Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY DOHA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1269

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

C O N F I D E N T I A L DOHA 0181

EXDIS

E.O 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAIR, QA, KU, TC, MU, BA

SUBJ: CIVIL AIR: GULF AIR NOTES

1. KNOWLEDGEABLE LOCAL SOURCES HAVE INFORMED US THAT MOST RECENT MEETING OF GULF AIR BOARD IN BAHRAIN FEB 15 DEVOTED PRIMARILY TO WRANGLE OVER UAE CONTRIBUTION TO FINANCING OF TRISTAR PACKAGE. AS ADDRESSEES WILL RECALL, GOQ LOANED GULF AIR \$160 MILLION TO CONCLUDE PURCHASE AGREEMENT WITH LOCKHEED. WE UNDERSTAND THAT DURING SHAYKH KHALIFA'S VISIT TO UAE IN DECEMBER, SHAYKH ZAYID PROMISED KHALIFA THAT HE WOULD PUT UP HALF THE AMOUNT, I.E. \$80 MILLION. ACCORDING SOURCES, IT APPEARS SRAE MAY BE RENEGING ON THIS PROMISE FOR ALL SORTS OF ALLEGED CONSPIRATORIAL REASONS, LEAVING GOQ HOLDING THE BAG, SINCE NEITHER BAHRAIN NOR OMAN IN ANY POSITION TO HELP FINANCIALLY. ONE SOURCE SPECULATED THAT UAE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS MULLA IS COLLUDING WITH MAHDI TAJIR, AND PERHAPS ALSO WITH KUWAITIS AND MEA, TO "SUBVERT" GULF AIR. WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT GOB'S YUSIF SHIRAWI HAS BEEN SENT TO DISCUSS SITUATION DIRECTLY WITH SHAYKH ZAYID, SINCE IT APPEARS THAT ZAYID MAY NOT KNOW WHAT HIS MINIONS ARE UP TO. SOURCE STATED IT INCONCEIVABLE THAT ZAYID WOULD GO BACK ON HIS WORD TO KHALIFA.

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2. RE POSSIBLE GULF AIR-KUWAIT AIRWAYS MERGER, IT APPEARS THAT

THIS AT STANDSTILL. ACCORDING ONE SOURCE, KUWAITIS HAVE REVERTED TO POSITION THAT HEADQUARTERS OF NEW JOINT AIRLINE MUST BE IN KUWAIT, THAT A KUWAITI MUST BE GENERAL CHAIRMAN, AND THAT ALL INTERNATIONAL ROUTES MUST BE FLOWN BY KAC WITH JUST LOCAL INTER-GULF TRAFFIC BEING LEFT TO GULF AIR. THESE CONDITIONS, ACCORDING SOURCE, COMPLETELY UNACCEPTABLE TO QATAR, BAHRAIN AND OMAN.

3. RE FURTHER GULF AIR RE-EQUIPMENT, SOURCES TELL US THAT THIS TOO AT STANDSTILL. BOEING CONTINUES TO REFUSE TO PROVIDE LETTER GUARANTEEING THAT THERE WILL BE NO HIDDEN AGENTS' FEES IN DEAL, WHEREAS BAC AND DOUGLAS HAVE COMPLIED WITH THIS REQUIREMENT. ACCORDING ONE SOURCE, QATAR AND OMAN SUPPORT ACQUISITION OF DC-9, ALTHOUGH SAME SOURCE STATED BOEING 737 MORE SUITABLE TO LONG-RANGE NEEDS, AND FURTHER EQUIPMENT PURCHASE PLANS.

4. COMMENT: WOULD APPRECIATE ALL ADDRESSEES CAREFULLY HOLDING ABOVE INFORMATION, SINCE WE HAVE BEEN CHARGED BY A LOCAL SOURCE

THAT INFORMATION PROVIDED BY HIM TO US ON GULF AIR MATTERS HAS LATER LEAKED FROM THE DEPT. ALTHOUGH DEPT INVESTIGATION DID NOT CONFIRM THIS CHARGE, WOULD APPRECIATE EXTRA CAREFUL HANDLING BECAUSE OF THIS.
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